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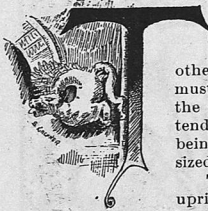
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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

TRANSPARENCY PAINTING ON LINEN.

BY W. WILLIAMS.

THE PREPARATION OF THE LINEN.



HE material upon which transparencies are painted is muslin of a fine and even texture; and this, like most other surfaces intended to receive color, must undergo the preparation peculiar to the kind of painting for which it is intended. Muslin, for a transparency, before being worked upon, must be strained and sized.

The straining frame is formed of two upright flat deal bars, having in the ends long mortice holes, in which the tenons of two cross-bars slide. Along the front inner edge of each bar, a strip of girt webbing is fastened; and to this the muslin is sown slightly, but in a manner sufficiently secure to allow of its being tightly strained.

The frame being closed, that is, the bars being brought together as close as the tenons and mortices will allow, the edges of the muslin are sewn all round to the girt webbing; and, in order to extend the muslin, the frame must be drawn out so as sufficiently to tighten the cloth. The frame is kept at this degree of tension by wire pins, which pass through the ends.

Being thus properly stretched, the muslin is ready for sizing. The size usually employed, is that known as gilders' or clear size, which, if good, is preferable to any other. It is prepared



Fig. 1.

from parchment cuttings, and is to be procured at a trifling cost, at shops where gilders' materials are sold.

An excellent size is made from isinglass, which is most valuable where extreme purity of color is necessary. The fine colorless gelatine, now very commonly sold, when dissolved and diluted to a proper strength, yields, also, a size well adapted for the preparation of muslin.

In sizing the cloth, great care must be exercised, in order that every part of the surface be covered; for if any part of the muslin remain unsized, the color will then be absorbed by the fabric, and damage the work, by staining the cloth.

When the first coating is dry, it will be found that the muslin has slackened, and hangs loosely in the frame. It will, therefore, be necessary to extend the frame, so as again to tighten

the muslin. A second coat of size must be applied, and when this is dry, the muslin must be again extended as before.

If the size be good and of proper strength, and these two operations have been carefully performed, two coats of size will be found sufficient; but if it is found, on applying color to a piece of muslin prepared for trial, that it sinks in spots and stains, a third sizing will be required; but, with due precaution, this is rarely necessary.

When the size is perfectly dry, the surface must be carefully rubbed with a piece of fine pumice stone. By this means a smooth papery surface is obtained, on which colors work easily and pleasantly. Without pumice, it is difficult to lay color evenly on a sized ground.

The cloth is now ready to receive the design, either by drawing or transfer.

The trial piece of muslin here alluded to, is desirable in works requiring nicety and care. It is a piece of cloth strained upon a small frame, and closed in the same manner, and at the same time as the larger piece.

When dry, we can easily determine whether our cloth is sufficiently sized, by testing the trial piece with colors. If it be not sufficiently prepared, the oil or varnish of the color, instead of settling on the sized surface, will be absorbed by the muslin, and show dark stains and spots. In such cases, the work will require a further sizing.

This trial piece admits, also, of testing the working quality of the color, as we dilute them with the vehicle to the proper strength.

It is indispensable to success, that during the progress of the work, the color be tested, in order to secure the color, tone, and



Fig. 2.

effect desired. But this cannot be done on the work itself; hence, the necessity of the trial piece of muslin, which should be at the side of the artist, that he may test, especially the more delicate tints, before applying them to the design; because, in the event of failure, the color cannot be removed.

Another method of mounting the muslin may be mentioned; that is to attach it at once to the fixed frame on which it is intended to remain when finished. As, however, there is considerable difficulty in straining large surfaces of muslin, this can be effected only where works of small size are required.

In using a fixed frame, the muslin is drawn as tightly as possible round the edges, and secured there by small tacks, driven to a depth only sufficient to hold the cloth, which may then be sized as already described.

The cloth, as in the other method, will contract when wet and relax when dry; but, on the fixed frame, it will be necessary to draw out the greater number of the tacks, to tighten the cloth, which being done, the tacks must be re-driven; and this must be repeated as often as it is found necessary to size the cloth, and until it is strained into a surface smooth, even, and sufficiently tense for working on.

OUTLINE OF THE DESIGN.

The linen being in a state of preparation to receive the design, the outline of the subject is made upon it by copying, or any of the other processes, according to the taste and powers of the artist.

Copying.—The different operations in use for procuring copies

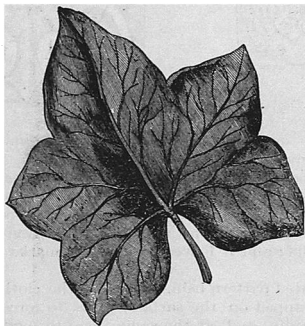
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of given subjects are of so much importance, and such extensive use, as to require particular explanation. Yet we shall limit these explanations to such a brevity of detail only, as shall be consistent with perspicuity.

The most important advantages of tracing, pouncing, and stencilling, are the facility and accuracy with which each subject is committed in outline to the cloth; and when the subject is complicated and full of detail, the saving of time is not one of the least of the advantages of these processes.

The utmost care, is in many instances, bestowed on an original, from which a series of copies is to be produced; and the greater the number of these copies, the greater is the amount of care that we can afford in the preparation of the original.

The different processes of reproduction afford so many means



of excellence, that this portion of our subject demands, at our hands, particular attention.

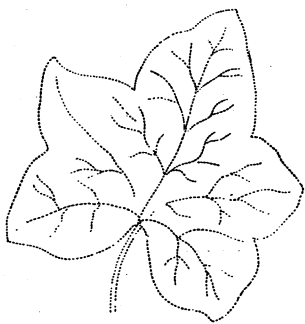
These processes possess valuable peculiarities in the extensive variety of arrangement of which the different parts, constituting a subject, are susceptible.

After any subject, or pattern, has supplied hundreds of copies, the same component parts may be arranged again and again, in other dispositions, and thus supply multitudes of originals, from each of which an almost unlimited number of copies may be taken.

The means chiefly at our service to this end, are the several modes of tracing, pouncing, and stencilling, which we now proceed to describe.

Tracing.—On a material so delicate as muslin, the outlines and forms of a pictorial composition cannot be made out with certainty and success, without the assistance of patterns and tracings.

The simplest method, and that most practised, is to draw the design upon a cartoon—that is, a piece of paper of the size



of the intended work. The outline must be drawn in a decided and bold manner, with a broad pointed reed pen, and common writing ink. The result of this is an outline sufficiently firm to be seen through the prepared muslin, when the latter is placed over it. In this situation, the cartoon with the design, and the muslin, are attached by means of thread, or in any other way that will hold them firm; and the lines of the composition, as they appear through the cloth, are traced out with a black-lead pencil.

When the design has been thus transferred, the cartoon is removed, and the outline on the muslin is strengthened, if necessary, with the reed pen and ink.

This method is applicable to almost every kind of subject; but for designs, containing forms of a certain character, methods hereafter described are employed.

Another method of transferring a cartoon, or drawing, to cloth, is to cover the back of the design with powdered black or red chalk, in such wise, that when the tracery is followed on the face of the design with a blunt point or style, the lines shall be repeated in the cloth placed beneath the cartoon or drawing.

But of this method, we may observe that it is not much employed for the transfer of designs to muslin, because there are other means more readily effective. Indeed, the simplest method of tracing is the most extensively useful, as it enables the artist to obtain designs and compositions from books, prints, and drawings, which, in turn, may be employed in endless forms of composition.

A simple process of surface printing is available for obtaining impressions of natural objects. In order to procure colored impressions of vegetable productions, such leaves are selected as have their fibrous tracery well defined; and this is, by means of an inking ball, covered with a mixture of some pigment, ground up in varnish or linseed oil.

The leaf thus prepared is placed between two sheets of paper, and being gently pressed, the impression of the tracery is transferred to the sheets of paper in the same manner that an impression is taken from any raised surface. Impressions of light sprigs, cuttings from branches, grasses, and many of the most beautiful forms of the vegetable world may be thus procured.

Stencilling.—It sometimes occurs that stencilling may be advantageously employed in certain kinds of ornamental work, where any form of small size, as, for instance, a leaf, is to be frequently repeated.

In such case, a stencil pattern is made by cutting the form of the leaf, or other object, in a piece of oiled or painted paper; the part which is intended to appear upon the work, being nicely cut out with a sharp penknife. The pattern is then applied to the cloth, and a short hair-brush, charged with color, is lightly brushed over the pattern, so as to leave the tint on the exposed space; and thus a copy of the former is communicated to the substance below. This affords, of course, only one flat tint indicating the form; the detail and markings of which are subsequently to be made out in imitation of the object.

Color cannot be applied with any degree of force or substance through stencil plates, which are suitable only for light and thin tints; and, for these, water color may be employed;



the stencil brush being but sparingly charged with color. It is important to observe, that if too much moisture be communicated to the cloth, that sharp and well defined outline which constitutes the beauty of a properly executed stencil painting, will not be procured. The brush should, therefore, be but slightly damped.

In stencilling with varnish color, the pigment must, for similar reasons, be much diluted, either with thin varnish, or turpentine; but the color must be sparingly applied, so as carefully to preserve the sharpness of the edges of the pattern.

Pouncing.—The most careful mode of combining and arranging ornamental designs, and afterwards transferring them to the prepared muslin, is by pounce patterns. These patterns are formed of outlines perforated through the paper on which they are drawn, by succession of small needle holes. The design thus pricked out is placed on the muslin, and dusted with a pounce bag containing fine dry powder; and thus the outline is repeated on the muslin, by the dots of powder which have passed through the minute holes. This method is used for the combination and arrangement of ornamental designs, as well as also to transfer them to the cloth.

For the purpose of explaining more practically the application of this method, let it be supposed that a somewhat intricate border of leaves is to be executed. Two, or, perhaps three original drawings of leaves may be wanted, of different forms and sizes, which properly arranged, will afford great variety. To this drawing, we can afford to devote time and attention sufficient for careful execution, as from this the form is readily reproduced to any extent, and available in numberless arrangements; the original leaf being carefully preserved for introduction into other compositions.

The leaf must be carefully outline upon thin glazed demy, or writing paper, which has been fastened down at the corners, to a piece of smooth and soft deal. The paper must then be perforated, throughout the outline, sufficiently to describe the form to be transferred. An engraver's etching needle is the best implement for marking out the form; or an implement may be made by inserting the eye end of a stout stocking-needle in a

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piece of soft wood, leaving the point projecting from the handle about half or three-quarters of an inch. From this tool, only one perforation is obtained at a time; but by placing on the wood, beneath the original outline, four, six, or more pieces of paper similar to that on which the drawing is made, the entire number is pierced at one operation, and thus numerous copies of one form are obtained which should be kept in a portfolio, to be used as required. Having obtained as many leaves or forms as may be required, they may then be arranged according to the design, or composition, which it proposed to realize.

Suppose the intended border to consist of a certain arrangement of these original forms, which is to be repeated until the length of the border is accomplished; and suppose the width of the border to be four inches, and the length occupied by the foliage composition to be eight inches; it will then be necessary to draw on a piece of paper sufficiently large, a parallelogram of corresponding size; that is, eight inches by four. Within the lines describing this form, the composition is slightly sketched, or otherwise marked, so as clearly to define the arrangement of the leaves, which are then to be connected by stalks, tendrils, or other forms which may be necessary to the pattern.

From this border piece, manifold perforated copies are obtainable by the process already described; and the pattern may be detailed on the muslin, by pouncing it along the lines of the border in successive repetitions, each of which will follow, and be joined to the preceding.

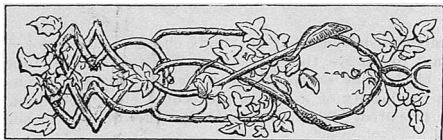
Each length should be outlined on the muslin, as soon as it is pounced, to prevent its being destroyed by the frequency of the pouncing.

A certain class of designs, admit of a pouncing pattern of much greater length than eight inches. In such cases, the paper, cut to the proper length, must be folded of the exact size of the pattern, backwards and forwards, one fold upon another; and the whole of these folds are perforated at once, and if the design be judiciously put together, the composition will be found continuous; and the entire result will be a border, in which the original subject is repeated throughout every succeeding length of the pattern. In the accompanying cut, the outlined portion is sufficient for the continuation of the pattern to any extent.

The employment of one design of limited extent, in the production of a subject formed of a series of repetitions, is analogous to the means whereby the paper-stainer produces his printed papers, whereon subjects of limited extent are printed in repetition throughout the continuous roll of paper.

Some designs do not admit of being reproduced by folding, as each length, by such means, is placed in reverse, in respect of that which precedes and follows it.

This difficulty is obviated, and the design is properly repeated, by fastening the duplicate pieces in due succession.



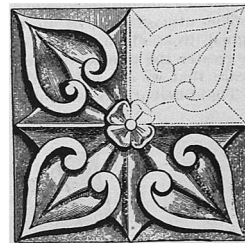
For corner, or centre ornamental designs, the paper is folded in quarto or octagon folds; and, of course, the perforation of one section, whether of a quarter or an eighth, is repeated through all the other sections, by the folding of the paper. The following cut show figures resulting respectively from one and two folds.

Again; suppose it be desirable to execute a butterfly, or a bird, either of these forms can be repeated in great variety in the same composition, by coloring them differently; and by

pouncing the forms, both from the front and the back, a further variety is obtained by their reversal. These dispositions are exemplified in Fig. 1.

Thus, by difference of color and disposition, flowers, leaves, sprigs in flower, and ornamental designs, are varied so as to secure a pleasing variety by the assistance of very few forms.

The pounce-bag is made by tying a little fine, dry, black



powder, in two or three small squares of the muslin (unsized) used for painting on.

The best pounce-powder, is pulverized charcoal; but black chalk, black-lead, and red chalk in powder, are also used. Charcoal, however, is preferable, as being less liable to soil the work. It is easily removed from the muslin, by lightly dusting with a silk handkerchief; and it leaves no stain, or mark, as the chalks frequently do.

The perforated pattern being placed on the cloth, the pounce-bag is lightly tapped on the surface, so as to force the powder through the muslin, and, at the same time, through all the perforations of the pattern; showing by the powder which has passed through the minute holes of the pattern, a dotted repetition of the form of the design.

Assuming, then, that the muslin is strained and properly sized, the perforated pattern ready, and the pounce-bag prepared, the muslin frame is placed on a table; or, if very large, upon tressels.

The pattern, or design, is then placed upon the strained muslin, in its proper position, and retained there by two or three weights, conveniently placed, to prevent the slipping or movement of the paper, on the application of the pounce-bag. If an accident of this kind occur, the truth of the design is, of course, destroyed; but, in order to remedy this, it is only necessary to dust the powder off the muslin, to readjust the pattern, and again pounce in the design.

The surface having been pounced sufficiently to distribute the powder through all the pricked lines, the paper pattern must be removed with the greatest care, lest the design be injured, which might easily occur as the powder lies so lightly on the muslin.

The pattern being removed, the pounced design is secured by being traced with a soft black-lead pencil, and drawn in with a reed pen, and diluted liquid Indian ink, or any other coloring fluid.

Common writing ink, diluted, may also be used for this purpose. By the addition of water, any tone of neutral, or grey, may be obtained from common ink; and thus any degree of force or lightness may be communicated to the outline. In cases where the use of ink, in any of its shades, may be undesirable, any preferable tint of common water-color, diluted so as to flow freely from the pen, may be substituted.

The reed pen is a convenient for outlining. It carries the marking fluid with a sharpness and freedom which imparts spirit and finish to the work.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

A LONDON correspondent writes: I was looking at some marvellous bookbindings, old and new, in at Zaendorf's only the other day, and I was charmed with some exquisite silk bindings inside the cover and the fly-leaf. It struck me what excellent use might thus be made of rare old bits of brocade and choice pieces of ancient satin which many possess. The other day I saw some dainty loose covers made for a choicely bound volume of poems. They were of fine white cambric—of course capable of being washed—daintily trimmed with tiny frills, choice lace, and exquisite stitching.

THE best way to remove the smell of paint is to first render the room as nearly as possible air-tight by closing the windows, doors and other openings. Place a vessel of lighted charcoal in the room, and throw on it two or three handfuls of juniper berries. After twenty-four hours the smell have entirely disappeared. Another method of doing the same thing is to plunge a handful of new hay into a pail of water and let it stand in the newly-painted room.